

McA. 3

(1)

September 16, Tuesday: McArthur 3, Outline 2

Top of the head, rainy morning.

--I have believed since 1978, with the neutron bomb, that the arms race was moving fast to a threshold of irreversibility (for a prolonged period, at least ten years); in which both sides would arm with "usable" tactical weapons for FU, and (as Aldridge and Schwartz, et al, saw before I did) CF weapons for preemptive damage-limiting, imitating each other, "hawks feeding off each other," pursuing parallel technologies, and probably pursuing parallel functions and aims as well. (I saw the former tactical problem before the latter; I was slow to see the latter CF race, because the idea of "credible FS" or actual "FS capability" seemed implausible to me, even as a hawk objective, given the SLBM capability of the US and the SU, and the problem of residual capability on both sides.

It was Aldridge's exposition of US ASW efforts that opened my eyes. And even after realizing that our efforts did amount to pursuit of a ~full first strike capability," the question was, Why? To back up FU threats, yes; but with what? Superiority? What would convey credibility? The US ASW capability did grant a kind of superiority; but how much did it amount to? Likewise, SDI, more recently, would do the same; but again, it would not eliminate the prospect of massive retaliation from the SU.

Decapitation? Another lead, as to how preemption would be regarded, and threatened, as effective. PII fit into this. But as Pike says, more recently they have realized the unreliability of this: hence, SDI (and offensive coverage: D5, MX, Stealth, CMs)

Or is it primarily the weight of the whole effort (Blechman), which expresses a focus on preemption and damage-limiting, a readiness to ask the question in a crisis, "Is it time to go first now? Will it be better than waiting?" ; and possibly a wishful belief that our massive efforts have been worthwhile, and have produced effective damage-limiting.

When Drell rejected my suggestion of superiority as a goal at the Sierra Club meeting (date? Steve Rauh), I was led to rethink it: and notice the effectiveness of Instability as a basis for threats. Instability requires the "collaboration" of both sides; but unlike Superiority it does not require "omissions, neglects, unilateral restraint" as the other's contribution; it is enhanced by the other's active competition, in particular by imitation in pursuit of parity and in pursuit of parallel goals of damage-limiting (and perhaps even FU threats, escalation: to protect East European sphere from non-nuclear intervention by threats of FU, and to protect SU forces in East or West Europe (or ME) from US threats of FU by threats of escalation or FS). All of these are pursued by the SU.

Asymmetry is not essential to this (though differences in geography and technology do produce asymmetries), nor is superiority in any sense (though various asymmetries are hierarchical, amounting to partial superiorities: e.g., ASW, SDI, coverage of land-based forces, coverage of all or most retaliatory forces, non-nuclear capability in various theaters).

Threats of FU are not very plausible outside one's own sphere or in the other's sphere. (It is characteristic of the CW, till now at least, that these are essentially the same; i.e., the two spheres are complementary and exhaustive, without overlapping or "no man's land", since 1945 or 1950. Roles and responsibilities of Western powers have shifted during that period for guarding parts of the "free world": e.g., the British retreat from East of Suez in the late Sixties, US for French in Indochina in mid-50's, US for British and French in ME oil, France and Belgium in Central Africa, US for Britain in Greece and Turkey in 1947 (and Saudi Arabia!))...

But since the purpose of threats for both is mainly to stabilise one's own sphere, not to expand it or threaten the other's, these mutual goals are compatible, and compatible with comparable threat-capabilities on both sides. Thus "instability" serves both, even though it also serves the other to a comparable degree as a basis for threats.

The problem (for world survival) is not that either pursues superiority, but that neither pursues stability! Either one could make choices which maximized deterrence of nuclear attack on itself by assuring stability: minimizing or eliminating any incentive for a first strike either by itself or its opponent; eschewing the credible threat of first strike or a credible hope of limiting damage to itself by offensive action, preemptive or otherwise. It could effectively neutralize the other's preemptive capability, and (by foregoing its own damage-limiting, preemptive capability) also neutralize the other's preemptive threat, which presumes some credible basis for fearing that it might be struck first.]

But neither side has done this: at least, since the introduction of MIRVs in 1970 (with the US eschewing any restraint on testing MIRVs or making them an object of negotiation, as early as 1968).

Many of those in the system on each side have undoubtedly focussed on narrow bureaucratic goals, or on limited strategic goals (parity for deterrence and prestige, damage-limiting) other than instability or first-strike credibility. The latter will be absent from their thinking, unfamiliar and implausible as a suggested explanation for their own efforts (or, as they see it, national efforts). Yet there are reasons for taking the "goal of FS threats, and instability as a basis for them" into account:

1. Certain high-level decisions on arms control policy: the neglect or rejection of attempts to restrain destabilizing

developments on both sides (MIRV, accuracy, short-time-of flight, ASAT, decap, SDI, ASW...)--even when these have been explicitly proposed within the system.

(Julie Margolis: this pattern applies especially when the omission favors the production of particular hardware: i.e., it can be seen as response to non-strategic incentives to make profits on hardware. But does this explain it all?)

2. High-level decisions on the allocation of national effort, on priorities (in light of low prospects of success in damage-limiting, low probability of surprise attack by the opponent, low marginal contribution of certain "modernizations" on the probability of surprise attack or on damage-limiting, problems of deficit and deficit-reduction, or, earlier, inflation, other pressing needs for the money; and the potentially destabilizing effects of these efforts on the arms race and on crisis stability)

(Again, the explanation can be given that the aim is simply hardware production, and perhaps military Keynesian effects, as well as a stimulus to R and D, a gov subsidy. Where there are conflicts over priorities, the result can be explained as the superior bureaucratic or societal strength of the sectors or personalities favoring production: the Labs, or the MIC, or Weinberger/Perle, or the Iron Triangle. Yet this strength can be questioned; especially as explaining such consistent results over time, and in face of real social costs and risks of the chosen course.

(However, it probably is true that these aspects are essential, though not perhaps sufficient, to explain the choices: that the strategic goals of FS and instability would not suffice to justify the great costs and risks of the policy if pursuit of them was not also rewarding to powerful sectors of the economy and polity).

3. It is the case that these goals are seen and articulated and acted upon by powerful actors and agencies within all administrations since Nixon (and even McNamara accepted damage-limiting, and relied on FU/FS strikes at least for alliance politics, as a concession to Congress, and within specific crises--even though he may have regarded the latter threats as bluffs, perhaps naively), as well as the pre-missile age of Eisenhower and Truman. (Even the early Lemay plans can be regarded as a form of decapitation).

The USAF does plan in terms of preemption, decapitation, damage-limiting --and justifies this in terms of the necessity of protecting allies in Europe (even though they say little about limited escalation to support first-use threats in limited nuclear wars). I know this from the inside, not just from inferences from weapons programs.

Certain kinds of hawks, who dominate the Reagan Administration, do emphasize the relation of strategic nuclear power to the effectiveness of US non-nuclear and tactical nuclear

power (Nitze, Rostow), the role of specific CF capabilities to the protection of allies (Scowcroft Commission on MX), the general importance of threats and "blackmail"; and do describe the SDI in these terms. Nor do these theorists, some in critical positions, depend on weapons manufacturers for their commitment.

4. Even though such strategic arguments may not be in public evidence for long periods, or are absent from the thinking of many in Congress or the bureaucracy, they surface at critical moments when other arguments fail or are challenged, to preserve certain programs or to maintain the rejection of certain arms control proposals. Sometimes, in such cases, they might indeed well be seen as "back-up rationalisations," with the "strategy" merely being one more way to sell weapons and maintain programs, and for that matter, to maintain the Cold War which in turn provides a good climate for selling weapons, and dominating the NATO alliance.

Yet the global interests which this strategy serves are real and persistent, rooted in powerful sectors of the economy and society, and these interests (of MNCs, and the politicians and institutions dependent on them) do go beyond the production of weapons. Even if the arms race is over-determined, with redundant "causes" and driving forces, multiple "sufficient" reasons, it is still important to recognize each of these, lest one suppose that weakening or countering all the others would be sufficient to end the race. Also, one may otherwise underestimate the recuperative, self-sealing capabilities of parts of the system, which may be reconstructed or reinforced by still other parts when challenged.

My points:

1. There is more intentionality, purposiveness, in US programs and their consequences (in company with Soviet programs), than is commonly supposed by critics of these programs. Their coherence, efficiency and aims appear when one considers purposes and criteria different from those assumed by the critics. (Some of these are different from the aims declared by Administration spokespersons; but in some cases, especially under Reagan, what is required for understanding is to pay close attention to what these officials or analysts are actually saying, and to take them, at least hypothetically, at their word, as the critics generally fail to do).

2. Thus, there is greater coherence, predictability, logical consistency among programs than is usually supposed. Moreover, greater resistance to change, when confronted by logical argument and reasoned opposition. (This is not merely bureaucratic inertia, or unreasoned "prejudice" or commitment by personalities, such as the SecDef or President; though it may appear as such, and even be so presented by officials, who choose for good reasons not to reveal publicly the private reasoning that rationalizes the programs internally). Both the reasons, and the "reasoners" with influence in the bureaucracy and outside it, tend to persist across different Administrations and both parties, reflecting interests and perspectives rooted outside the party structure and outside the Executive branch.

3. The specific content of these core interests and rationales relate to: global economic interests; global power projection; alliance relations and US hegemony in NATO and other theaters and relations; US readiness for military intervention; US reliance on FU threats, to supplement intervention capabilities (to amplify, reinforce, protect this capability); likewise, US reliance on threats and readiness to escalate; US preemptive and damage-limiting capabilities, both independent of ("insurance") and supportive of threats of first strike, the latter supporting threats of escalation, FU, intervention.

4. All this emerges, for me, from applying to the understanding of current and past "security" policy:

a) My experience as a nuclear war planner, and knowledge of past war plans (and, in light of this, my reading of current discussions of war plans; note the new availability of past war plans, via FOIA, Herken, Rosenberg,) and of current plans, via interviews: Ball, Kaplan, leaks...

.(The implications of these have not been adequately analyzed or appreciated by the arms control community).

b) My study of past nuclear crises, and participation in some (and in light of this, my unclassified research into past crises, on

which there is much new data. See recent reference by Halloran in Times; Nixon last year, etc. Blechman on 1973...

Thus, my sense of the probability of nuclear crises in future derives from unusual awareness of past "near misses," analogous to near collisions in airports and elsewhere, or near melt-downs in nuclear plants; or problems and near-disasters of the space shuttle. "Secret nuclear crises; and near-nuclear wars."

My listing of these was the first extensive one (following Lens' shorter list, possibly the first, which did not explore the relation of these threats to the forces driving and structuring the strategic arms race. (See revelation by Haldeman, confirmed by Hersh, of Nixon's threats; and Morris; this started me, in 1974-75, on this approach.)

c) My past, classified study of Command and Control, Execute Procedures, possibilities of unauthorized action, and Presidential Delegation, along with vulnerabilities and limitations. (See D and CINCPAC Study). This is analogous to knowing the design flaws of the Chernobyl plant, and the sloppy practices in Soviet plants. Or the content of the concerns about the booster and the O-rings, with respect to the Challenger.

d) My participation in the process of government decision-making relating to (secret) escalation in Vietnam: a mysterious and paradoxical episode, even from the inside, both in its original intentions and driving energy, and in its prolonged continuation, in face of failure, growing costs and challenge, and its implementation by a bureaucracy that had become disillusioned. In all these respects it resembled the nuclear arms race, and nuclear crises. (And World War I; along with the structural similarity, in the role of offensive forces and preemption, and prior planning, and imperial motives).

See my study, initially unique, of the Pentagon Papers (still under-analyzed); and in light of this, subsequent studies; in particular, recent ones based on White House materials (Berman). (See implications of Kahneman and Tversky; along with my own earlier work, still much cited, on ambiguity.) All these show strong similarities between the decision to escalate the war in 1965 and the decisions leading to the Challenger and the Chernobyl disasters; likewise, to the decisions that launched World War I, that have escalated the arms race at crucial points, policies that have constructed the approaching instability, and to potential decisions to initiate or escalate nuclear war in future crises.

On the continuation and implementation of the Vietnam War, especially the bombing, and of the arms race, my study of Milgram and Kelman is relevant.

e) My long study of strategic bombing practice and doctrine, crucial to understanding the evolution of nuclear war planning and doctrine, and US reliance on it, including the readiness to target cities.

f) My long, related concern for the moral aspects of strategic and nuclear bombing, in particular the targetting of non-combatants and the risks accepted of "collateral damage" (now encompassing, possibly, all life on earth). Aside from issues of critical evaluation and moral/political opposition to current policies, it is crucial to understanding current and past policies to know the secret shift in moral criteria and constraints that accompanied Allied bombing policies and WWII. (And see Lilienthal, on "no fences," and the GAC objections to H bomb). Current policy choices pit against each other opposing moral frameworks, not an outsiders' moralism against a bureaucratic resistance to applying moral criteria. Milgram and Kelman are also relevant both to the moral criteria that people apply and how they actually behave. (As is my own experience with civil disobedience, which will not be addressed in this project).

g) Understanding many of these issues--both the moral ones and actual governmental decisions--demands a conceptual framework for analysing (1) decisions under uncertainty, and (2) threats, though few analyses address either in a systematic way. (Analysis of the issues addressed by the Pastoral Letter, for example, really requires an ethics of risks/gambles and of threats, which scarcely exists, though symposia by ethical philosophers since the Letter have begun such an effort. Here my work on uncertainty, and on threats and bargaining, is highly relevant; but I don't propose to include much or any of this in this project, though I will be addressing it in the seminars in Chicago and San Francisco, the latter sponsored by Kavka and the American Philosophical Association). (Should I mention this or not? Probably not.)

However, my past work on threats and bargaining certainly deserves mention, in connection with the actual governmental policies.

h) (My experience in opposing the arms race by a variety of public means, from lobbying to civil disobedience, is part of the background I bring to these issues; and has motivated my close study of the obstacles to changing these policies. But this, too, will presumably be left implicit in my proposal and the actual study. Writing on civil disobedience, for instance, will probably be separate from this project, along with ethical analysis.)

The work of the project can be described as:

1) Gathering together, comprehensively, the observations, speculations, analyses and conclusions on the nuclear arms race--its driving forces, instrumental aims, US and Soviet nuclear strategy and its implementation, implications for the likelihood of nuclear war, and (one ethical/empirical issue) what has permitted so many leaders and followers to escalate and maintain it?--that are now recorded in note-files, outlines, and

transcriptions of my lectures, seminars, interviews and public statements.

Reflecting on these and writing them out coherently will undoubtedly, judging by my past experience, amount to much more than an editorial process; it will constitute research, with the likelihood that half or more of the final insights and conclusions will have emerged from the period and process of writing.

2) Addressing the issues of the arms race from the various important and generally-neglected perspectives listed earlier (relating, as it happens, to my own areas of personal experience and special study!)

3) Addressing certain perplexing, paradoxical aspects of the human situation in the nuclear era, certain persistent puzzles that have occupied me (and in some cases, many others) for one or two generations...bringing to bear my own reflections on these over that period, my personal experiences, new data, and applying recent psychological theories: along with a view of Administration strategy, including my own conceptualization of it.

4) Expounding a certain view (hypothesis) on the strategic aims and the strategy embodied in US (and perhaps Soviet) weapons development and deployment programs and nuclear war plans, and their relation to US global interests and policies of intervention. This with relevance to understanding and prediction (and strategies of resistance to these policies: not a subject of this project).

5) Explaining (by way of (4), and earlier perspectives) my personal judgements of the risks of nuclear war, and the increasing risks I feel to be imminent in the ongoing qualitative arms race; thus, explaining and conveying a sense of urgency about changing attitudes, policies and the course of events (starting with changed attitudes, commitment, urgency, immediate goals and tactics within the antinuclear movement, and the somewhat separate arms control community, as well as opinion-makers and the public at large).